Unit .13

Session .03

The Gifts of God's Power

Scripture

1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:6-15

19 Elijah left there and found Elisha son of Shaphat as he was plowing. Twelve teams of oxen were in front of him, and he was with the twelfth team. Elijah walked by him and threw his mantle over him. **20** Elisha left the oxen, ran to follow Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you." "Go on back," he replied, "for what have I done to you?" **21** So he turned back from following him, took the team of oxen, and slaughtered them. With the oxen's wooden yoke and plow, he cooked the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he left, followed Elijah, and served him. ... **6** Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD is sending me to the Jordan." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. **7** Fifty men from the sons of the prophets came and stood observing them at a distance while the two of them stood by the Jordan. **8** Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water, which parted to the right and left. Then the two of them crossed over on dry ground. **9** When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you." So Elisha answered, "Please, let me inherit two shares of your spirit."**10** Elijah replied, "You have asked for something difficult. If you see me being taken from you, you will have it. If not, you won't."**11** As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire with horses of fire suddenly appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went up into heaven in the whirlwind. **12** As Elisha watched, he kept crying out, "My father, my father, the chariots and horsemen of Israel!" When he could see him no longer, he took hold of his own clothes, tore them in two, **13** picked up the mantle that had fallen off Elijah, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. **14** He took the mantle Elijah had dropped, and he struck the water. "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" he asked. He struck the water himself, and it parted to the right and the left, and Elisha crossed over. **15** When the sons of the prophets from Jericho who were observing saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." They came to meet him and bowed down to the ground in front of him.

Intro Options

Main Point:
God empowers His people to carry out His mission.

Option 1

Imagine your church is about to start a major drive of some kind. It could be that they're about to start a major missions drive, or a capital campaign, or they want to start a ministry to the homeless in the community. To kick off this initiative, the pastor has asked your group to create a video with the theme "All In." Your students should create a skit showing what it means to be "All in." It doesn't have to be a church setting. They could show athletes being "all in" for their sport, or musicians being "all in" for their band, or students being "all in" for their school, or a combination of all the above. The goal of the video is to get everyone in the church, from the toddlers up to the senior citizens, to get fired up and want to fully commit to whatever the initiative your church is about to start.

Let them prepare the skits and then show (video) them. In today's lesson, we'll see someone who was "all in" for his mission: Elisha, who would be fully committed to carrying on Elijah's mission. If you see parallels between their skits and Elisha's actions (leaving his family and his farm, sticking close to Elijah, getting Elijah's cloak, etc.), bring those up as the lesson unfolds.

Option 2

Tell your students to pretend they've each won a full scholarship. All their expenses are covered for one year so that they can choose anyone in the world whom they can shadow as an intern. It could be an athlete, a musician, a businessperson. Whom would they shadow? Give them some time to think of their answers, and then have them share them.

After everyone has shared, ask them to pretend that year has gone by, and they have just finished their internship. The people with whom they interred come to the students individually to inform the students that they (the people whom they shadowed) are retiring. The students are going to be taking the place of the person under whom they interred. They get one request from the person under whom they interred: it can be a physical item, it can be knowledge, it can be some skill. What would they ask for? Give students time to think of their answers, then let them share.

Lead into how Elisha "interred" under Elijah and then asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. How does Elisha's request parallel the students' requests?

TEACHING PLAN

Read 1 Kings 19:19-21.

Elijah anointed Elisha, God's chosen prophet, in verses 19–21. Elisha then proceeded to follow God's call. But who was Elisha? His name means "God saves." Elisha was a farmer, and apparently a wealthy one, since he had several teams of oxen (v. 19).

Elijah placed his cloak on this farmer, symbolizing the transference of prophetic power (v. 19). Elisha's commitment is evidenced in what follows. He left his team of oxen and followed Elijah (v. 20a). Then Elisha asked to first kiss his family good-bye before following Elijah. Elijah permitted him to do so (v. 20c). Then we read of Elisha's total abandonment of all things for God's will.

Elisha kissed not only his family good-bye, but he also kissed the world good-bye. He destroyed all of his old means of sustenance in verse 21. He told everyone publicly that he was following God's will, and it seems he threw a party to tell everyone. He wasn't reluctant; he was excited.

- **Is there something in your life you need to abandon to follow God's call?**
- **What is something you have given up in order to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?**

Read 2 Kings 2:6-12a.

We pick up the story with Elijah going town-to-town trying to shake Elisha (vv. 1-6). Two of the towns were places known as centers of pagan worship. Bethel was where Jeroboam set up the golden calf (1 Kings 12:28b-30). Jericho was the place that had been cursed by Joshua (Josh. 6:26). In these towns, we're introduced to "the sons of the prophets," who were pupils of the prophets and part of a prophetic community. The sons of the prophets seem to have been set up strategically in these cities that are deeply entrenched in idolatry. These prophets witnessed the passing of the torch to Elisha.

Elisha did not let Elijah shake him. Scholars believe that the point of Elijah trying to lose Elisha was to test whether Elisha would count the cost of discipleship, to see if he would persist in ministry.

Elijah, as a new Moses figure, then parted the Jordan with language similar of the Red Sea crossing in Exodus, and Elijah and Elisha went across on dry land (v. 8). Once they crossed, Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. The meaning here might convey more than just a double-portion of power. It may also carry the idea of the inheritance of the first-born, a double portion of the inheritance (Deut 21:17), which would imply Elisha would live as though he was Elijah's firstborn and carry on his work.

- **What are some ways we are called to carry on the work of the gospel in our own day and age?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God empowers His people to carry out His mission.

1 Kings 19

19-21. Elijah accepted the Lord's reassurances and anointed Elisha. Like the widow (1 Kings 17:24), the people on Mount Carmel (18:39–40), and Ahab (18:41–19:1), Elijah experienced the power and healing of God. So he set out to obey God, fully aware that God is his strength and His word will not fail. Elijah threw his cloak, or mantle, upon Elisha, a symbolic way of transferring the prophetic power from one man to the next. Elisha then said farewell to his family, then slaughtered his oxen and burned his plow, which demonstrated the clear break between his old and new lives.[1]

2 Kings 2

9. When Elijah was about to be taken into heaven by the Lord, Elisha knew it. Three times Elijah said he would go on ahead alone, but Elisha would not let him. Elisha wanted to stay by his master's side. His desire to be like Elijah was so great that when Elijah asked what he could do for his disciple, Elisha asked for a double share of Elijah's spirit. 'Double share' is the allotment of the first-born son in the laws of Moses. In Jewish tradition, the eldest son was to take care of his parents for the rest of their lives. Thus, he received twice as much as other heirs. God granted Elisha's desire to be like his master, allowing him to perform great miracles. Twice as many miracles were recorded in the books of Kings from Elisha's ministry than were recorded from Elijah's ministry.[2]

11-12. Here we read of a war vehicle that came for Elijah, a "chariot of fire with horses of fire" (v. 11). Elisha called Elijah the "chariots and horsemen of Israel" (v. 12). The appearing of the chariot of fire symbolizes that these prophets were the power of Israel because God's power was with them. The chariot was an instrument of military might and Elisha was saying Elijah was like the army of God, the true defense of Israel because God was with him.

Elijah went on to his eternal reward without tasting death because it is God who is in control of death and He alone can overrule it. Elisha was saddened and showed signs of remorse over losing a mentor (v. 12b).

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 24, DDG)

Mission of the Church

The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

TEACHING PLAN

Read 2 Kings 2:12b-15.

God will not stop calling Israel to faithfulness. Elijah might have been gone, but God wasn't. The God of Elijah was still present in 2 Kings, which was what Elisha was saying when he struck the river with Elijah's cloak (symbolizing his prophetic call). Elisha asked where the Lord was (v. 14). Elisha believed that God had certainly not abandoned the people, and he was seeking God for power to minister to them. Elisha, like Elijah, operated with a great vision of God. They had great faith because they had a great God—as do we.

Elisha then parted the sea with Elijah's mantle and headed toward Jericho. Then he went to Bethel to root out the pagan worship. The company of prophets realized that Elijah had passed his prophetic work on to Elisha (v. 15). They showed Elisha reverence, as the new representative of God for Israel, who had the spirit of Elijah resting on him.

- **What do we learn from Elijah and Elisha about the necessity of living out our faith by the power of God?**

Elijah's life points us back to Moses. Both left behind disciples to take up the work after calling Israel to covenant faithfulness. We now see in Elisha a new Joshua. Both Joshua and Elisha continued the work of their predecessor, and both had names that mean "God saves." Further, Elisha came through the Jordan to Jericho and he came to root out Canaanite worship, which also has an echo of Joshua's leadership. Like Joshua, Elisha proved to be strong and courageous, as the Lord was with him.

But Elijah also points us forward to John the Baptist, another prophet who would wear the same clothes as Elijah. John the Baptist was a forerunner to the "greater Joshua," crying out in the wilderness against a national power seeking his life with a woman, akin to Jezebel. He too anointed his successor at the Jordan and saw his successor as the firstborn receiving the promised inheritance. Here, in 2 Kings 2, we see that God was orchestrating a plan for the salvation of His people, and He will never cease to have a man calling Israel to faithfulness.

- **As we see the whole story of Scripture unfold, why does it inspire us to worship and trust our God?**

The story of Elijah passing on the mantle to Elisha is exciting, challenging, and encouraging. These two prophetic leaders are major figures in Old Testament history and are important figures for seeing the grand narrative of Scripture, which climaxes in Jesus.

Elisha's call to follow Elijah is also similar to Jesus' call to His followers, who must deny self to follow the Lord. Following God's will is a privilege; however, it comes at a cost. But passing on the truths of God's Word to the world is worth it.

Elisha was a human being, like Elijah, and was therefore in need of God's power to continue this prophetic ministry. We also share that in common with Elisha, for apart from the enabling power of the Spirit we will not fulfill the Great Commission. Finally, this portion of Kings reminds us of the faithfulness of our God, who will preserve a remnant until the promised King comes, the Lord Jesus. Because God is entirely trustworthy, we can trust Him.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God empowers His people to carry out His mission.

2 Kings 2

13-14. Only Elijah's cloak remained. Elisha took it back to the Jordan and asked where Elijah's God is—the God who caused drought, brought fire from the sky, raised the dead, and took Elijah to heaven. When Elisha struck the water with the cloak, he discovered that while Elijah was gone the Lord was not, for the water parted again. The prophets who witnessed the whole scene understood that Elijah's spirit, the spirit of zeal and power, now rested on Elisha. Still, they sought for Elijah for three days, then returned to the new master prophet. Apparently there was still some doubt about whether Elisha could really replace Elijah, though it seems that he had at least laid claim to the status once reserved for Elijah among the company of the prophets.[3]

The Spirit who empowered Elijah had now come upon Elisha, and miracles immediately followed. As Elijah's true successor, Elisha was able to repeat Elijah's action in parting the waters (vv. 13-14). There is also a kind of parallel in the life of Joshua, for Joshua also crossed the Jordan in Joshua 3 and entered the land of Israel near Jericho, 'repeating' Moses' action in parting the waters (Ex. 14)."[4]

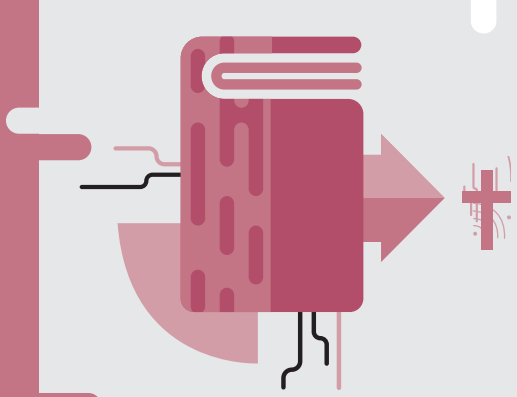
Activity

We've seen how Elisha was given a sign to confirm his calling to carry on Elijah's ministry: he took up Elijah's cloak. In a similar way, we Christians are to carry on Jesus' ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. Split your group (or let them split themselves) into smaller groups (two to four each). Have each group come up with a specific virtue with which Jesus "cloaked" Himself (e.g., humility, compassion, wisdom, grace, etc.). Have them share their "cloak virtue" with the rest of the group. If any groups pick the same virtue, have them play rock-paper-scissors to see who gets to do the virtue; have the losing group pick another virtue.

Next the students should come up with how we today can confirm our calling by carrying that particular "virtue;" how can we practically put on Jesus' cloak like Elisha did Elijah's cloak? They can either come up with specific examples to share verbally, or they can produce a short skit to act out what Jesus' compassion, grace, wisdom, etc., might look like in our present culture. Give the students time to prep their statements/skits and then share them. Debrief as needed.

(p. 26, DDG) Christ Connection

When Elisha succeeded the prophet Elijah, he asked for the same spirit that was in Elijah to be given to him. God granted Elisha's request and revealed His presence through a miracle. Years later when Jesus prepared His followers to begin their ministry, He instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who came upon them and confirmed His presence in miraculous ways.



THE GIFTS OF GOD'S POWER

1 Kings 19:19–21; 2 Kings 2:6–15

THE GIFTS OF GOD'S POWER

God empowers His people to carry out His mission.

JESUS CONNECTION

When Elisha became God's prophet after Elijah, he asked for the same spirit that was in Elijah to be given to him. God granted Elisha's request and revealed His presence through a miracle. Years later when Jesus prepared His followers to begin their ministry, He instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who came upon them and confirmed His presence in miraculous ways.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS – Complete dedication in everything I do.

HEAD

What did Elisha give up in order to demonstrate he would wholeheartedly follow Elijah?

When Elijah told Elisha to stay while he went to the Jordan river, how did Elisha continue to show his dedication to Elijah?

HEART

Which of these tasks and activities do you do or would do wholeheartedly?

- Homework
- Plan a surprise party for your friend
- Serve in the preschool ministry at church
- Mow the lawn
- Practice your sport or instrument

Why are some of those activities easier to do with all your heart than others?

Elisha didn't know exactly what was in store for him when he immediately followed Elijah. Do you think knowing the outcome makes it easier to go all in on something? Explain.

HANDS

Elisha followed Elijah with his whole heart because he wanted to serve God. Think of one thing you could give up in order to be more wholehearted in following God. (*Examples:* social media, an unhealthy relationship, video games, etc.). Commit to letting go of one of your distractions and use the extra time and space to learn more about who God is and how to follow Him.